

Utah Energy Research Board Meeting Minutes

Date: May 13, 2026

Meeting Call to Order Time: 10:04 AM MDT

1. Roll Call

- **Presiding/Designee:** Tracy Reese (acting for Emy)
- **Board Members Present:** Tracy, Todd, Larry, John, Charles, Laren, Steve Ellis, Mason Baker, and Prerna (joined late).
- **Quorum:** Confirmed present.

2. Approval of Agenda

- No changes or additions were made to the circulated agenda.
- **Motion:** Moved by Laren and seconded by Steve to approve the agenda.
- **Vote:** Approved unanimously.

3. Approval of Prior Minutes

- No changes or amendments were requested for the minutes from the prior meeting on February 11th.
- **Motion:** Moved by Steve and seconded to approve by John. The February 11th minutes approved.
- **Vote:** Approved unanimously.

4. Project Discussions and Votes

- **Digital Twin Project**
 - **Summary:** Dr. Jeremy Pearson provided updates addressing detailed fund allocations and IP organization following a request from the last meeting. Partners include the University of Utah, INL, and OED, with active conversations and verbal interest from Valor Atomics.
 - **Budget Update:** The proposed match from the institute was updated from \$200,000 to \$250,000 due to budget fine-tuning.
 - **Motion:** Larry moved and Steve seconded to approve the project at the updated \$250,000 amount.
 - **Vote:** Approved unanimously.
- **ARPA-E Project**
 - **Summary:** Dr. Jeremy Pearson informed the board that ARPA-E would not be issuing a plus-up award for this recycling project.
 - **Action:** The project proposal and vote were officially retracted/withdrawn.
- **Intermountain West Smart Nuclear Corridor**
 - **Summary:** Dr. Jaron Wallace and Supathorn Phongikaroon presented this \$6 million Department of Energy (DOE) grant application. Led by the University of Utah in partnership with UNLV, University of Idaho, and INL, it focuses on revitalizing

research reactors, digital twins, cyber physical security, and workforce development. The lab's role in this is to advise and assist particularly the workforce development side of it. The lab has a letter of support from Valar Atomics. U of U received a letter of support from Nusano and Element Nuclear.

- **Financial Request:** The USREL will receive \$192,000 for staff hours and facility internships. The required state financial cost share is 10% (\$19,200).
- **Motion:** Laren moved and John seconded to approve the project.
- **Vote:** Approved unanimously.
- **Rare Earth Recycling Project**
 - **Summary:** Dr. Jaron Wallace introduced a DOE Phase 1 proposal for the conceptual design and lab-scale testing of a unit to recycle printed circuit boards and old hard drives. This is in conjunction with Reaction Engineering International (REI) and MIT.
 - **Financials:** Total award to the state is \$670,000, of which \$500,000 is federal funding and \$170,000 is the state cost share (primarily covering staff hours over 3 years). Application deadline is May 29th.
 - **Discussion:** Board members raised questions regarding waste stream ownership and supply chain tracking, which will be explicit in final contract details.
 - **Motion:** Laren moved and John seconded to approve the project proposal.
 - **Vote:** Approved unanimously.
- **EcoGen Project**
 - **Summary:** Dr. Brian Schooff presented a Phase 1 STTR proposal to the US Navy for a novel waste heat exchanger for naval vessels.
 - **Financials:** Total Phase 1 funding is \$140,000 over a 6-month period, with the research lab receiving a 3rd to 60%. No state funding or cost share is required.
 - **Discussion:** Members questioned why the board votes on federally funded projects with no financial requests of the state. It was noted that board bylaws and the scope of approvals will be examined at the next meeting.
 - **Motion:** Prerna moved and Larry seconded to approve the project.
 - **Vote:** Approved unanimously.
- **Earthen Project**
 - **Summary:** Dr. Brian Schooff presented a pilot-scale energy storage testing project involving an SBIR application with Earthen. The project would require renting or purchasing a testing skid currently on site owned by EcoGen (a competitor of Earthen) for an estimated \$1.5 million over time.
 - **Action:** Because the financial details and exact testing timelines remain incomplete and unconfirmed, the board voted to defer this project proposal to the next meeting.
- **REI Lithium-ion Battery Recycling Project Budget Period 2**
 - **Summary:** Kaden provided an informational update on this ongoing project with REI, BYU, and MIT. Following a 5-to-6-month pause by the DOE, the project received the green light to proceed into Budget Period 2. This period shifts focus from lab-scale research to designing pilot-scale feeder and separation components for the onsite rotary kiln.

5. Yearly Schedule Approval

- The upcoming fiscal meeting cadence was presented for August 12th, November 18th, and February 10th at 10:00 AM.

- **Motion:** Todd moved and Laren seconded to approve the schedule.
- **Vote:** Approved unanimously.

6. Public Comment

- Jess Housekeeper (Emery County resident and Director of Utah Operations for Valor Atomics) provided comments thanking the board for their support and service that they are doing for the couple of counties here and the State of Utah and taking the time to vote on these matters.
- He shared a positive update regarding a recent onsite DOE evaluation consisting of 18–20 nuclear and emergency safety experts, noting that the final readiness report is expected by this coming Friday to prepare for receiving fuel and starting the reactor.

7. Other Business

- Jess Housekeeper offered a tour of the facility to any board members interested. Tracy Reese requested that Summer send out an email to coordinate scheduling a future board meeting in person at the lab facility along with a tour.

8. Adjournment

- **Motion:** Charles moved and Steve seconded to adjourn the meeting.
- **Vote:** Approved unanimously.

Sources:

- [Utah Energy Research Board Meeting - 2026/05/13 09:55 MDT - Recording](#)